Besides the nest, an old nest (probably of the previous year) was also present on another frond of the same tree. These two records show that the Northern Palm Squirrel also makes nests in fronds of palms, other than those reported in cavities in trees, buildings, among others.

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4. PREDATION ON NORTHERN HOUSE GECKO *HEMIDACTYLUS FLAVIVIRIDIS* RÜPPELL BY FEMALE NORTHERN PALM SQUIRREL *FUNAMBULUS PENNANTII* WROUGHTON

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The Northern Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii* Wroughton is a common squirrel in northern India and is commensal to man (Prater 2005). On April 25, 2012, we observed a Northern Palm Squirrel struggling with a Northern House Gecko *Hemidactylus flaviviridis* on a *durry* (sort of carpet) spread in the playground of a college in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

To get a better look, we quickly went closer, and were surprised to see that the squirrel had overpowered and killed the lizard by that time. The autotomized tail lying slightly away from the site, and the squirrel was eating the lizard from the end of the broken tail. On being disturbed by us, it carried away the gecko, climbed a chair, and continued feeding on it. Almost all the fleshy parts, ribs and bones of the limbs, except the digestive tract, some bones of vertebral column and parts of the skull were eaten away by the squirrel. The squirrel left after eating the prey. The whole event was over within ten minutes.

Later, we followed the squirrel and found that it was engaged in nest building, and that it was a female with a large abdomen, probably in an advanced stage of pregnancy.

The Northern Palm Squirrel is generally considered a herbivorous rodent that feeds on fruits, seeds, leaves, etc. However, the females of rodents require protein and mineral rich food during their breeding season (Challahan 1993; Mattingly and McClure 1982; Payne and Wheeler 1968; Veloso and Bozinovic 2000). Meat eating by ground-dwelling squirrels is a well established fact (Bailey 1923; Friggen 2002; Morgart 1985; Packard 1958; Wistrand 1972). Some studies have also shown that pregnant and lactating squirrels feed on bones to fulfill their requirement of calcium and phosphorus (Carlson 1940; Coventry 1940). *Funambulus pennantii* is also reported to kill and eat birds (Tiwari 1990). Thus, requirement of protein must have caused this large herbivore to feed on the lizard.

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5. PROBABLE FIRST SIGHTING OF DARK MORPH OF EASTERN CATTLE-EGRET *BUBULCUS COROMANDUS* FROM LAKHIMPUR KHERI, UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

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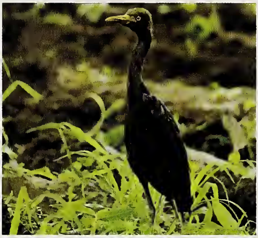
I spotted a dark morph of Eastern Cattle-Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* on June 22, 2011, at Alinagar village, Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh, India. It behaved like the normal birds, but did not 'socialise' with them. At first sight, it appeared that the bird was soiled as it was the rainy season. But after careful observations for more than two months, I confirmed that its dark coloration was true. Had the dark colour not been a case of hyper-pigmentation, it would either have been washed off or faded by that time. I did not visit the place after that.

This is probably the first record of what could be a dark morph or aberrant form of the Eastern Cattle-Egret.



Eastern Cattle-Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*

6. NEW RECORD OF COMMON COOT *FULICA ATRA* LINNAEUS, 1758 FROM ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS, INDIA

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The Andaman and Nicobar archipelago comprises of 572 islands, extending over 800 km and running north to south between 6° 45' N and 13° 30' N, and between 90° 20' E and 93° 56' E with extent of 8,249 sq. km.

The study on birds of Andaman and Nicobar Islands was initiated by Beavan (1867) listing the avifauna of Andaman Islands, followed by Hume (1873, 1874 a, b, 1876), Abdulali (1964, 1965, 1967, 1971, 1979, 1981). Recently, a few researchers have contributed to the avifauna of Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Chandra and Kumar 1994; Ezhilarsi and Vijayan 2006; Kailash and Rajan 1994; Pande *et al.* 2007; Sankaran 1995, 1998, 2001; Sankaran and Vijayan 1993; Sivakumar 2007; Sivakumar and Sankaran 2002; Sivaperuman *et al.* 2010; Tikader 1984; Vijayan 1996, 2007; Yahya and Zarri 2003; Yoganand and Davidar 2000).

As part of major ecological studies on wetland birds of south Andamans initiated during 2012, and sponsored by the Science Engineering Research Board (SERB), Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi, we have been surveying the area regularly. During these surveys, seven individuals of Common Coot *Fulica atra* were recorded in the tsunami inundated wetlands at Sippighat, South